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By

Edwin A. Morris,

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the Faculty of the

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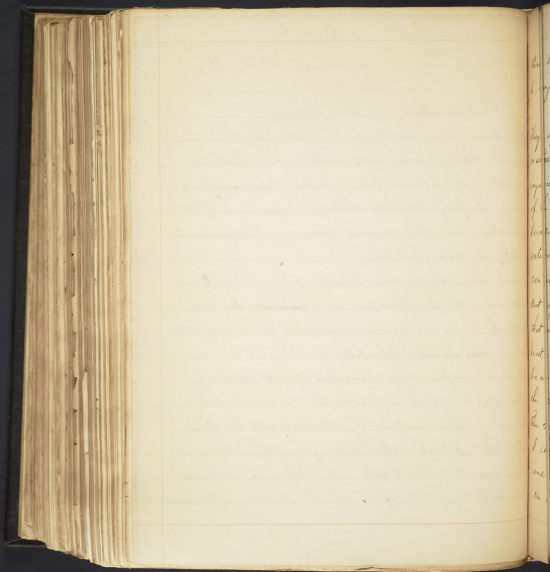
San Francisco

On The
Diseases of The Liver.

The liver is evidently the largest gland in the human body, and, since nature throughout her works has seldom been accused of supererogation, we may safely conclude that the importance of its functions over the animal economy, is commensurate with its magnitude.

From this consideration, together with the variety and delicacy of its structure, we cannot be surprised to find it on so many occasions the seat of action, and dangerous diseases.

I shall confine my observations to that form of disease, to which it is liable, and which has been denominated by Nosologists Hepatitis. Of this disease there has generally been made two varieties, the acute and chronic, the pathognomonic symptoms of each I shall presently enumerate.



But before doing so, it will be necessary perhaps
to say a few words relative to their
causes.

They appear to be all those producing other inflamma-
tions, such as the application of cold, external
injuries from contusions, blows &c; certain passions
of the mind, violent exercise, intense summer heat,
sudden vicissitudes from heat to cold, long continued
intermittent and remittent fevers, and various solid
concretions in the substance of the Liver.

But of the above causes, I am inclined to believe,
that we shall find violent exercise, intense summer
heat, and sudden vicissitudes from heat to cold, to
bear a greater proportion in the production of
the disease, than the whole of the others combined.

The manner in which the latter operates, we have,
I think, satisfactorily explained by the classic
and ingenious Doctor James Johnston, in his work
on Tropical climates.

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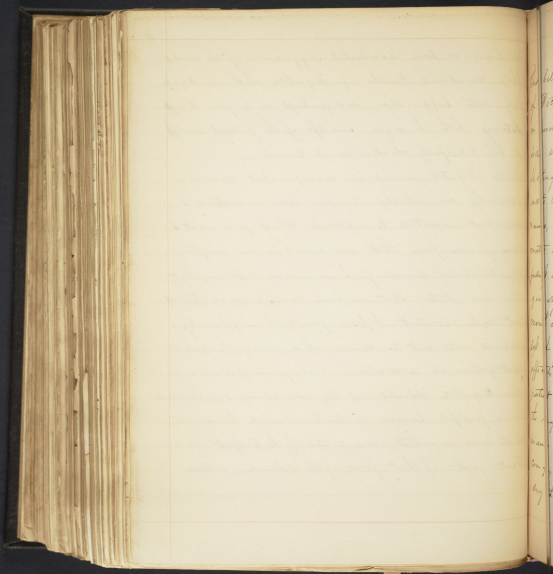
Spasmodic of biliary secretions and peristalsis,
 he says, "The effects resulting from the application of
 cold, under these circumstances, will be in all degrees
 from a slight shiver to a fever, and even instant death.
 We will suppose, then, only in a slight degree, during
 the temporary torpor of the extreme vessels on the surface,
 and of the vena portarum, the *pore biliaris* and
 secretory ducts, will partake of the same along, and
 the bile will stagnate till the reaction succeeds and
 propels it forward in its accustomed course, with a
 degree of acceleration proportioned to the quiescence.
 It is plain, that by frequent repetitions of this, the
 vessels and ducts in question, will lose tone; and, as
 along is the parent of spasm constriction of the ducts
 must at these times take place; the bile will become
 viscous, occasionally from stagnation, and be with more
 difficulty brought forward into the intestine, during
 the subsequent increased action of the vessels. This
 obstruction will form an action constantly impending

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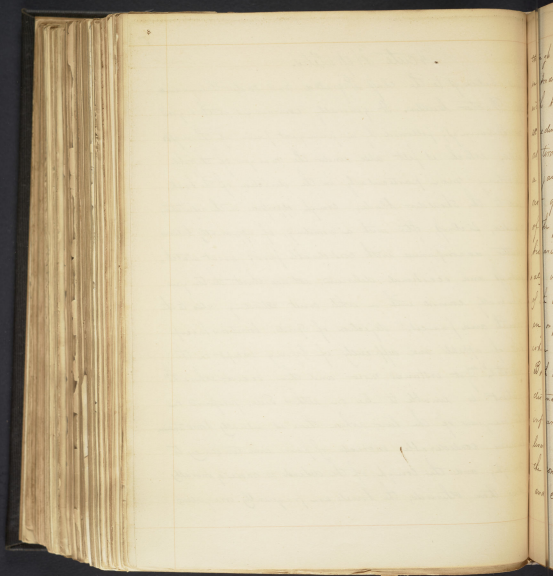
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till time, or some accidental aggravation of the causes
above mentioned, Rends up Hepatitis, which runs rap-
idly into suppuration, and perhaps in a few days
destroys both the organ and life of the patient, unless
it be skillfully checked in its career."

Whether Hepatic Abscesses are more prevalent now than
formerly, or whether they are better understood I
shall not undertake to determine; though from what I
can learn from those who have had an ample
opportunity of deciding, I am induced to believe, that
they are not. That we have more cases of intermit-
tent and remittent bilious fevers than formerly, I
presume will not be denied, which being the case it
must follow as a natural consequence that we have
more Hepatic Abscesses, as they have always been considered
as a fruitful source of such disorders. I now come
to the more immediate consideration of the subject, and shall
treat first of that form of the disease called



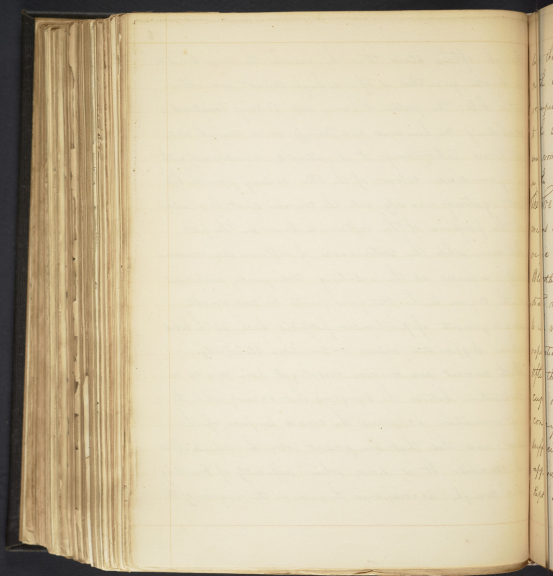
Acute Hepatitis.

This belongs to the class Pyrexia and to dothymia of Doctor Cullen. It generally commences with rigors or shiverings, followed by a pungent pain of the right side, which is felt also under the margin of the ribs, shooting more particularly in the direction of the back, and to the shoulder blade; cough appears in the respiratory trachea, & often with a vomiting, of apparently bilious matter accompanied with considerable fever, great watchfulness and occasional delirium, extreme thirst, the tongue generally covered with a white crust, extending also to the mouth and fauces; dejection of spirits, sometimes incessant loss of appetite and difficulty of lying except on the affected ^{side}, at instances now and then occurs where the patient is unable to lie on either side, pressure on the region of the liver where there is usually some tenderness increases considerable increase of pain and tendency to cough, and the cough of the side is some generally dry than otherwise; the bowels are frequently irregular.



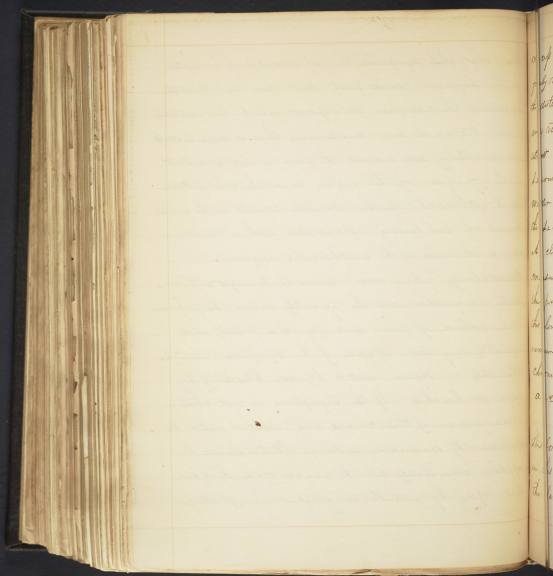
though often slower than the reverberation, the urine discoloured in small quantities, is often a high colour and often with bile; the pulse is hard and strong, sometimes exceeding one hundred and twenty in a minute, and, at times intermitting; it is attended occasionally with a jaundiced colour of the skin, arising from the bile not getting readily into the common duct, by reason of the pressure of the inflamed liver on the pyloric valve, while the continuance of inflammation occasionally induces as the retarding consequence, adhesions of the organ to the contiguous parts or considerable engorgements of particular portions, such as the lobes where suppuration ensues, or sometimes abscesses.

Both ancient and modern nosologists, have made a distinction between the symptoms that occur when the inflammation occupies the convex surface of the liver, and those that are present when the disease affects the concave. It is said, when difficulty of breathing and cough accompanies the pain in the region of the



live, that these symptoms ^{denote} the inflammation to be seated
 in the superior convex part; but where the inflammation
 occupies the concave or inferior, which lies contiguous
 to the stomach and duodenum, there is more heaving
 and vomiting; and, moreover, the pain is not so violent
 in the region of the organ as in the other instance.
 The treatment of this disease consists in the general
 means of subduing inflammation, with a strict and
 rigid observance of the antiphlogistic regimen.

Bleeding, "*plena rivo*" should be brought into imme-
 diate requisition and the quantity drawn be proportioned
 to the violence of pain and pyrexia present, and
 repeated very soon again if the symptoms remain high.
 After this, we should resort to topical bleeding by
 cups or leeches. If the symptoms do not abate in
 consequence of these means, and a vascular action be
 sufficiently reduced, a large blister should be
 applied immediately over the region of the liver, and
 kept open by suitable dressings or reapplying it

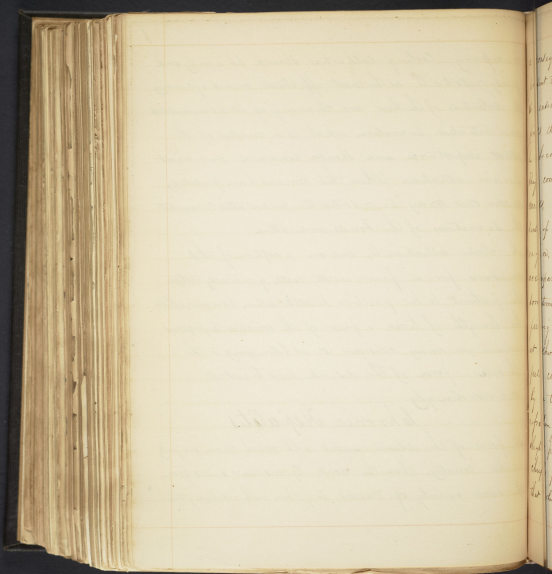


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mercury; Cooling cathartics should be early and
fully resorted to as the most effectual means of forming
the distention of the liver, and clearing of its accumulated
and vitiated secretion, which is a matter of the
utmost importance and should command our most
serious attention. When these means have preceded,
milder ones may be resorted to, calculated to regulate
the secretions of the bowels and skin.

A close attention to, and an adoption of these
measures for a few weeks, will generally restore
the patient to his pristine health. When, however, after
this length of time, a few of the milder symptoms
remain, we may consider it as belonging to the
chronic form of the disease and treat it
accordingly.

Chronic Hepatitis.

This form of the disease is met with much more frequently
in this country, than the acute species, and arises from
the same variety of causes, together with its being often

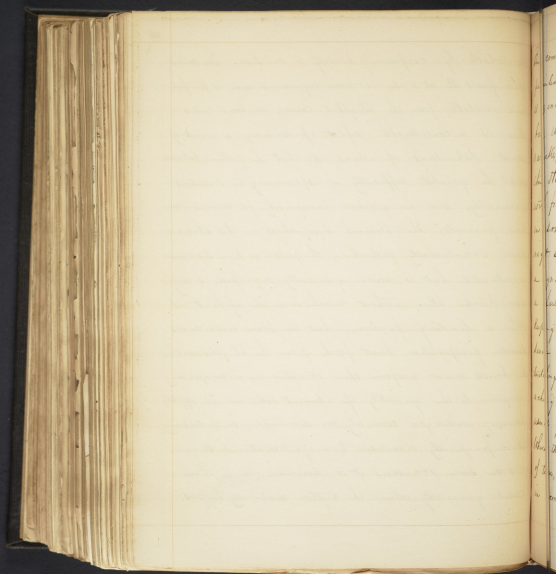


a consequence of it. The symptoms of this disease, often present themselves with such ²protean variety, and are so insidious in their march, that the patient often finds the very fabric of his constitution sapped, before he becomes aware of its existence.

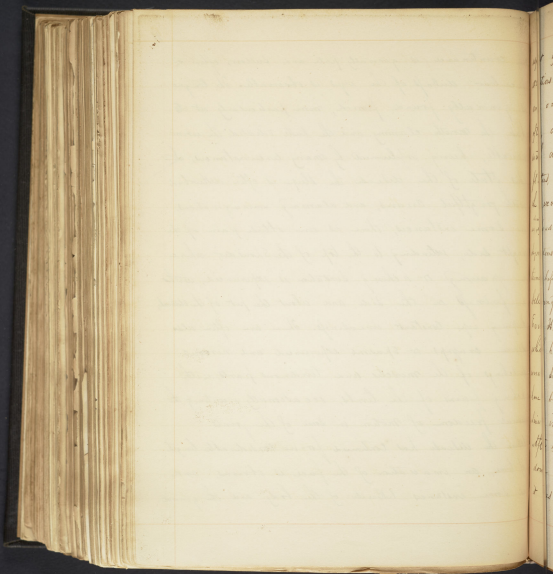
They commence with a sense of fulness or stuffing after meals, at times at ~~times~~ ^{times} accompanied with a painful sense of oppression and borborygmi of the whole epigastric region, with a disposition to vomit occasionally, accompanied with flatulence; tinnitus aurium, and sometimes a sensation of fluttering or distressing feeling of vacuity at the pit of the stomach; and, at other times, on the most trifling mention, the patient feels considerable lassitude and languor followed by a tendency to sleep: this sleep however, is seldom refreshing but is interrupted by distressing dreams; slight pain is occasionally felt on either side, but it chiefly fixes itself on the left; to this may be added, that when in bed, the patient can only lie tolerably

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comfortable by confining himself to one side. The mind often feels ill at ease, becomes capricious and is fretful and irritable, from the slightest cause; in some cases there is a considerable defect of memory, a want of usual distinctness of ideas, so that the patient labours under the greatest difficulty of explaining his sensations accurately, and a general incapacity for mental exertions prevails. The stomach sympathizes in this state and feels occasionally disturbed, the pulse is here become accelerated but is more generally depressed, a dry and harsh skin, without much increase of heat, is often a leading feature, but in some individuals sudden perspiration burst forth from the slightest exertion. The bowels never perform their operation in a corresponding proportion to the quantity of aliment taken in: the appetite however undergoes commonly no diminution, on the contrary, it is frequently increased to a preternatural degree, yet on some occasions it is diminished as in those cases generally where the symptoms materially suffer.

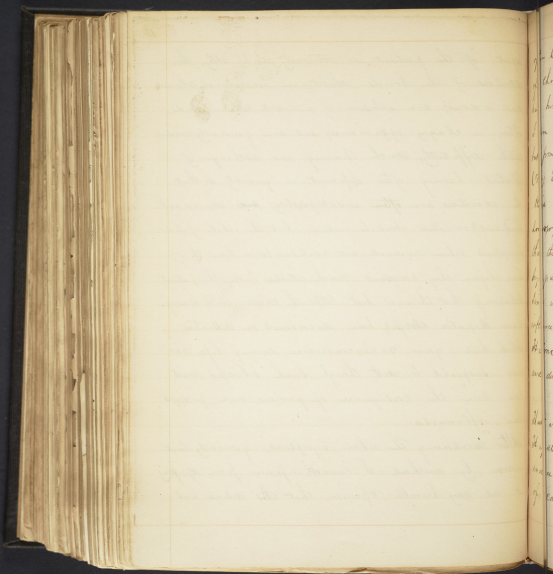


The countenance is generally pale and sallow; often a peculiar dulness of the eyes is observable. The tongue is generally found furred, more particularly at its base, the mouth clammy and the taste vitiated, the urine variable, being influenced by many circumstances; & this state of the disease the sleep is often disturbed with frightful dreams, and alarming imaginations: in some instances, there is one obtuse pain of the right side, extending to the top of the shoulder, where a gnawing or aching sensation is experienced, with a fulness in the side, and about the pit of the stomach, keeping up constant uneasiness. There are often also some cramps or spasms experienced and nervous twitches of the muscles and tendinous parts, with aching pains of the limbs, occasionally wanting the usual freedom of motion in some of the joints. When the disease has continued for a considerable length of time, an emaciation of the face is obvious, and in some instances likewise of the body, and the general



aspect of the patient is extremely unhealthy; the
 excretions of the bowels exhibit an unnatural colour
 and odour, are adhesive, of a dark muddy, and
 often, a clayey appearance, and are generally voided
 with difficulty, much straining and discharge of
 flatus, being often deficient in quantity, so that
 the excretions are often unsatisfactory, ~~and attended with~~
^{and} ~~attended with~~ ^{attended with} ~~irritation~~ about the rectum, but the whole of these
 symptoms when moderate will continue for a length of
 time before they command much attention from the patient,
 believing that there is but little the matter with himself.
 Even Hepatic abscess, have discovered on dissection,
 which had given no inconvenience during life, nor
 were suspected to exist, though such abscesses must
 have been the consequence of previous and progre-
 ssive inflammation.

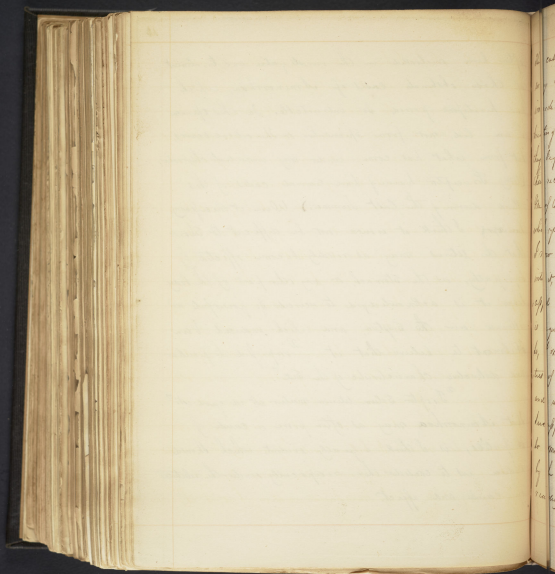
After mentioning the above symptoms, generally laid
 down by authors, I cannot refrain from expressing
 it as my humble opinion, that this disease had



often been overlooked in the investigation and treatment of these obstinate cases of Amenorrhoea, which has heretofore proved so intractable. In this opinion I am led, not from Speculation or theoretical views, but from what has come under my immediate observation, (My Preceptor having had several cases of this kind during the last Summer.) When it occupies long, I think it would not be difficult to show that the uterus may as readily become affected by sympathy, as the stomach, or any other part of the body. Since it is acknowledged to exercise so powerful an influence over the system, and which induced Van Helmont to believe that it "imprinted the peculiar and distinctive characteristics of the sex."

2^o Propter Solam Uterum mulier id id quod est."

That Amenorrhoea may as often prove a cause of Syphilis, is I think equally evident, which should induce us to consider them reciprocally under the relation of cause and effect.



The cases to which I have alluded, had obstinately resisted every course of treatment, hitherto laid down, but, immediately on directing the remedies to the liver, and treating the disease solely as an affection of that viscus, they began to yield and exceeded, in the rapidity of their recovery, our most sanguine expectations.

One of the cases had been upwards of two years standing, which yielded to this treatment in a few months.

I now come to the treatment. But, before entering into it, I shall enquire whether the practice that was successful ten years since in this section of the country, is equally happy at the present period. In doing this, I must consult those who have had better opportunities of deciding. "What the same practice," says an old and experienced practitioner, "which was eminently successful in their treatment eight years ago, is not so much so now. I believe will generally be admitted by the faculty, in this part of the union. Formerly, they readily yielded to the mercurial action, but it ^{now} does

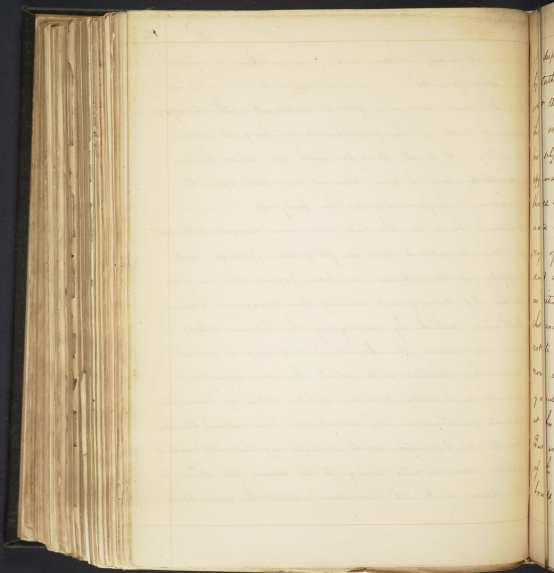
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now, at least in my circle, and in that of some
of my friends."

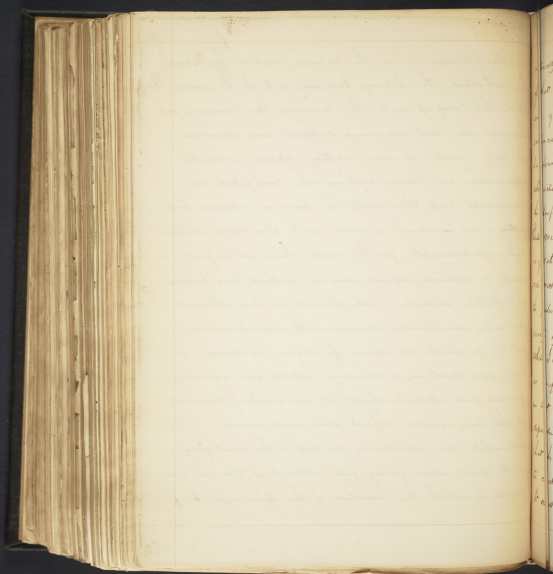
This, I believe, will be found consonant with the expe-
rience of most of the practitioners of this part of the
country. At least, it is so with all whom I have
consulted, and I have been at no little pains to
procure information on the subject.

Finding this to be the case, we were compelled to resort
to other measures, that might prove effectual, and
happily for mankind we have found this in a
much less dangerous remedy than Mercury. I mean
Cathartics, which by evacuating the bile and reflux
and clearing the bowels of that load of fecal
and other matter, with which they are oppressed,
promote a healthy secretion of bile, instead of having its
elements floating in the circulation. This natural stimulus
promotes chylification, which strengthening the whole material
fabric communicates energy to the mind, till at length
the bloom of health once more revisits the pallid cheek



of despondency. In the management of this dilemma by cathartics, the primary direction is to the Physician, what the compass is to the mariner. He should regard them as the most unerring criterion, and almost as his only guide. So long as they assume a vitiated appearance, we should continue the cathartics: We should not stop them until the liver is enlivened, and action taken in such a way as to show some steady proof of principle, for they will assume for a few days a natural aspect, and in a short time become as vitiated as ever. "As soon as we have obtained this end, we should proceed with delicate caution, not to prostrate or annoy the organ too much; as now, we must in a measure rest on our oars, having gained our desired object; for an excess of stimulus, at this time, would defeat our endeavours."

But while our attention is directed to the enlivening of the Liver, and giving full action to the stomach and bowels, by which the function of the liver will be



naturally influenced; we should not overlook the restoration of that balance, which equally belongs to the surface and general circulation, to attain which, in some instances of congestive plenitude of this organ, it will be found necessary likewise to deplete the vessels by abstraction of blood from the arm, or by cupping over the surface.

These means, steadily persisted in, and assisted by a well regulated diet and regimen, with the wearing of flannels, are met to the other will be found generally, to restore the patient in a few months, while others, from a variety of causes, will require a much longer time. While I have considered mercury in the stage of the disease as ineffectual, I am nevertheless convinced of its superiority in that more advanced stage of the disease, or that depending on structural alteration. Here it is evident, that the most active and energetic means are requisite to check the progress of such an alarming evil. It must therefore be introduced into the system in the smallest

